Newspapers by ancestry
https://www.newspapers.com/image/425621732

Downloaded on Mar 27, 2024

SPEAKING OF LANGUAGE HOWARD RICHLER

English meets Pilipino

SPANISH, TOO, MARKS PHILIPPINE ENGLISH

Many Filipinos speak fluent English, using words that reflect local influences

"Armed *Barangay* Self-defense Units to Help Stem Kidnappings."

"The National Coconut Coordinating Council, an *aggrupation* of coalitions and organizations of coconut farmers submitted a draft ..."

"The justice department said 58% of *plantilla* positions nationwide for prosecutors are still vacant."

The above are either headlines or news items I culled from the Manila Times, and the italicized words highlight the distinctive English vocabulary spoken in the Philippines.

English is one of two official languages in the Philippines. The other language was previously referred to as Tagalog, but since the Philippines became independent in 1946, the indigenous language has been called Pilipino (in local pronunciation) and Filipino (in Spanish and English). This was done to associate the name with the whole nation, because traditionally, Tagalog had been associated almost exclusively with the Manila area and Luzon.

Explorer Ferdinand Magellan claimed the islands for Spain in 1521 and the name Philippines honoured the monarch, Philip II. Spanish control lasted until 1898, when the islands were ceded to the United States in the Treaty of Paris, and English-language education began in 1901 with the arrival of 540 American teachers. English became the language of education, and as its use expanded, it became indigenized through the inclusion of vocabulary from local languages and the adaptation of English words to describe local conditions and to satisfy local needs.

After independence, the stature of English diminished, and in 1974, a bilingual-education policy was instituted, dictating that at the primary-school level, English be taught only as a subject. At higher levels of education, however, English is far more dominant. In any case, close to the 40 million people, representing more than half the population in the Philippines, are fluent or semi-fluent in English.

Some of the distinctive words connected to Philippine English, such as the italicized words at the start of the article, tell us something about the history of the islands. The barangay was established by Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s as a kinship-based political unit and the word is often used in the sense of "neighbourhood." The original barangays referred to the large boats used by Malay settlers who arrived thousands of years ago. These newcomers settled in scattered communities that were also called barangays. The word derives from Malay and refers to the number of people that can fit into a large boat.

Other English words connected to society have been adopted from Spanish such as the above-mentioned "aggrupation" adopted from the Spanish *agrupación*. The word "plantilla" is used in many contexts such as "staff," "pattern" or "faculty assignments" and derives from the Spanish *plantilla*, "staff."

English is one of the two official languages in the Philippines.

Naturally, many words in Philippine English derive from Tagalog. In this category we have "carabao," (from *kalabou*) a water buffalo; "sampaloc," (from *sampalok*) the fruit of the tamarind; and "kundiman," a love song. A word from Tagalog that has tunnelled its way into Standard English is "boondock," (from *bundok*, mountain). The word was originally adopted into American English in the 1940s with the sense of "rough country"; now it is usually rendered as "the boondocks" and is used to refer to a provincial, unsophisticated locale commonly called "the sticks."

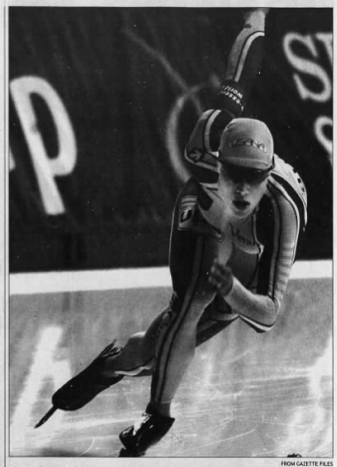
Philippine English can be quite creative in how it arranges linguistic elements. Thus, a thief becomes a "holder-upper" who might "carnap" your vehicle. If the miscreant is more upscale, she might be charged with "estafa," not fraud. Some other interesting combined elements are "cope up" a combination of to "keep up and cope"; "jeepney" a blend of "jeep" and "jitney bus"; and the term "captain ball," used to refer to the captain of a sports team or, more generally, to a person in charge of a situation.

Given the Spanish influence, there is no shortage of Spanish adoptions such "asalto" (surprise party), "merienda" (light meal in the afternoon), "bienvenida" (welcome party) "querida" (mistress or sweetheart) and "oppositor" (opponent).

Food words also abound. The term "viand" refers to a dish served to accompany rice in a Filipino meal. Several food items including fish, pork and eggplant might be done "inihaw" (grilled). "Bagoong" is a paste made from fish or shrimp that is salted or fermented for several weeks. There are all sorts of "pancit" (rice-noodle dishes), including pancit palabok, described by one source as "a merienda of noodles bathed with shrimp gravy sauced and garnished with sliced boiled pork, flaked smoked fish, ground chicharon or pork crackling, sliced hard-boiled egg and chopped green spring onion." "Adobo" is a national dish comprised of braised chicken or pork. Some distinctive fruits are "kalamansi," a citrus fruit halfway between an orange and a lime, and "sampalaya," a bitter melon.

The high level of fluency in English does not please everyone. Some argue that English is the language of colonialism and of a privileged elite, and have thus argued that the use of English in the Philippines should be curtailed. On the other hand, English-language advocates argue that English is a natural means of expression and promote its use because as an international language, it protects speakers against insularity and allows them access to the whole world.

hrichler@sympatico.ca



FROM GAZETTE FILES

Catriona Le May Doan skates to a world record in the women's 500 metres in Calgary, Dec. 9, 2001.

Le May Doan sounds sweet, sincere

CONTINUED FROM H1

It was also significant that speed skating was not her sole youthful activity but one among others, including track, at which she also did well.

The book fudges when it comes to the ordeal of training as opposed to the adrenaline-rush of big-time competitions. When she writes, "I trained six hours a day, six days a week," the phrase whizzes by with the effortless strokes of Le May Doan on her home ice at the Calgary Oval. The actual experience of all of those meticulously controlled blade strokes – surely millions during 22 years – must have been quite different.

"Most people don't understand what athletes go through," she writes. True, and the book won't help them to.

Though the book in no way tries to get below the skin of its subject, here and there are telling contradictions. Le May Doan never liked joining a club yet she really likes training in a large group and being "just another athlete." She can accept not making the podium if she's done her best, yet time and again she admits to really wanting those gold medals. An attractive woman, she seems slightly embarrassed by her sex appeal. And though she appears so at peace with the world, she can still declare, "I love that feeling of being pushed to the limit, where you're about to start crying because you're so exhausted and you feel so horrible." This could explain why at age 32 she's still competing to win (at a similar pinnacle, the great American speed skater Bonnie Blair retired at 31).

Le May Doan's intensity is apparently reserved for the ice. How else to interpret how she and husband Bart Doan, a rodeo competitor and Calgary Oval icemaker, celebrated after she unofficially broke two world records in two days: "I went home, napped for two hours, then went out to a movie with Bart."

The book presents an image that is sweet, unaffected, sincere and competitive-tough. Catriona Le May Doan sounds like the Nancy Greene of Canadian speed skating.

As to what's under her skin-suit, Le May Doan modestly replied, "None of your business."

Montreal writer Victor Swoboda trained for 10 years as a competitive fencer.

Caetano Veloso's writing falls far short of his music

This windy and dense memoir is further marred by a brutally pedestrian translation

Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil

By Caetano Veloso
Knopf, 350 pages, $40

JUAN RODRIGUEZ
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

FROM GAZETTE FILES

Caetano Veloso: sensual music.

Aficionados of what's lumped together as "world music" rightly consider Brazilian singer-composer Caetano Veloso among the most important figures in pop-music history. He is routinely compared to Bob Dylan, John Lennon and Paul McCartney, and Bob Marley.

Readers might well enjoy the [illegible] of names and [illegible] in Tropical Truth, a memoir of Veloso's formative years, culminating in the radical and chic tropicalismo movement of 1968, earning the wrath of Brazil's military dictatorship and putting him in jail briefly.

The rest of us, however, might be frustrated by a work that's as bloated and windy as Veloso's music is sensual and articulate. In view of last month's election of former union leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as president, the time seems a wasted opportunity at illuminating Brazil's revolutionary poetics.

Commissioned after editors were impressed by Veloso's 1982 take on Carmen Miranda for the New York Times, Tropical Truth has no shortage of colourful characters and requisite artsy intrigues: his colleague and alter-ego Gilberto Gil, with whom he was arrested; his god-like singing sister Maria Bethania, who paved his way to Rio; diva Gal Costa, Jorge Ben, Tom Zé. They reinvented Brazilian pop by packing it with strains of Brit-pop, Dadaists, jungle rhythms, bossa nova and Brazilian modernist poets of the 1920s to create a genre that was more interesting, socio-culturally speaking, than most counter-cultural fodder.

Alas, this exciting time is not only ill-served by the brutally pedestrian translation but, it seems, the author himself. There's a glut of names and academic-political jargon, but little ebb and flow. Plowing through this hyper-aware but flatulent mess, the odious thought arises: are they really the pampered café-society flame-throwers they seem in this tome? Say it ain't so, Caetano.

Enough glimmers of insight managed to keep me reading. Veloso considered Elvis corn-pone compared to the elegance of bossa-nova hero Joao Gilberto, and Marilyn more effective as a trashy Pop Art icon than an embodiment of beauty. Catholic in his tastes, he rails against "the taste police – aesthetic education in the form of humiliation and cultural snobbery" that struck him in childhood when he thrilled to the "ridiculously vulgar" melodies of 1940s star Vicente Celestino.

Social class is an issue throughout, pitting the so-called provincialism of his Bahia against the sophistication of Rio.

Yet reminiscences of drug-taking experiences seem laughably adolescent – wow, spiritual, man – and a detailed account of his arrest and two-month imprisonment (for "offensive" lyrics) is awash in melodrama. Exiled in swinging London, his biggest epiphany is taking the Rolling Stones seriously.

Reading this bizarre mixture of self-serving and touchingly soul-baring anecdotes seemed like enduring the after-dinner speaker from hell: "But it so happens that I like long sentences and, in fact, I think I could never express myself, even in conversation, in any other way." Alas, he's not bearing the pithy pearls of Caetano the artist.

Veloso's music – such as the beautifully packaged CD Livro (with expertly translated lyrics) and the more recent Live in Bahia – speaks far more eloquently than Tropical Truth.

Caetano Veloso appears in concert at Place des Arts tomorrow.

Juan Rodriguez is a Montreal writer.

BEST-SELLERS

The best-seller lists are compiled from information provided by Montreal bookstores. The first number in parentheses indicates a book's place last week; the second shows how many weeks the book has appeared on the list.

Fiction

1. **Quentins**
Maeve Binchy (1) (11)
2. **Your Mouth is Lovely**
Nancy Richler (-) (2)
3. **Reversible Errors**
Scott Turow (-) (1)
4. **The Polished Hoe**
Austin Clarke (-) (1)
5. **The Janson Directive**
Robert Ludlum (4) (2)
6. **The Little Friend**
Donna Tartt (2) (5)
7. **Answered Prayers**
Danielle Steel (-) (1)
8. **I Don't Know How She Does It**
Allison Pearson (-) (1)
10. **The Navigator of New York**
Wayne Johnston (-) (6)

Non-Fiction

1. **The Blank Slate**
Steven Pinker (1) (5)
2. **Longitudes and Attitudes**
Thomas L. Friedman (4) (9)
3. **Paris 1919**
Margaret MacMillan and Richard Holbrooke (-) (1)
4. **Stupid White Men**
Michael Moore (-) (30)
5. **Memoirs**
David Rockefeller (-) (1)
6. **Dogs, Houses, Gardens, Foods and Other Addictions**
Sondra Gotlieb (-) (1)
7. **What Went Wrong?**
Bernard Lewis (-) (25)
8. **9-11**
Noam Chomsky (3) (20)
9. **The Lives of the Muses**
Francine Prose (9) (2)
10. **First Drafts**
J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer (10) (2)

Special Interest

1. **Flavourville**
Lesley Chesterman (1) (27)
2. **Smart Shopping Montreal**
Sandra Phillips (3) (50)
3. **Modern Classics**
Donna Hay (4) (2)
4. **Earth From Above**
Yann Arthus-Bertrand (2) (22)
5. **More Marvellous Canadians**
Gordon Snell and Aislin (5) (2)

In Paper

1. **Life of Pi**
Yann Martel (1) (4)
2. **The Corrections**
Jonathan Franzen (2) (13)
3. **Hatship, Friendship, Courtship, Lovership and Marriage**
Alice Munro (6) (3)
4. **Clara Callan**
Richard B. Wright (3) (12)
5. **Atonement**
Ian McEwan (-) (1)
6. **The Sigma Protocol**
Robert Ludlum (4) (5)
7. **Isle of Dogs**
Patricia Cornwell (8) (6)
8. **Bel Canto: A Novel**
Ann Patchett (7) (19)
9. **Acid Row**
Minette Walters (5) (2)
10. **Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress**
Dai Sijie (10) (2)

Books in French

On this list, (f) indicates fiction and (n) non-fiction.

1. **Un Peu de Fatigue**
Stéphane Bourgoignon (f) (9) (2)
2. **Robert Pioché aux Commandes du Destin**
Pierre Cayouette (n) (-) (1)
3. **Le Guide de l'Auto 2003**
Jacques Duval and Denis Duquet (n) (3) (4)
4. **Voyage Fatal**
Kathy Reichs (f) (-) (3)
5. **Après l'Empire**
Emmanuel Todd (n) (6) (3)
6. **Et Si Ça Venait du Ventre?**
Pierre Pallardy (n) (2) (3)
7. **Robert des Noms Propres**
Amelie Nothomb (f) (5) (5)
8. **Dernier Royaume, tome 1 Les Ombres Errantes**
Pascal Quignard (n) (-) (1)
9. **Paroles d'Hommes**
Mathias Brunet (n) (4) (2)
10. **Mike Contre-Attaque!**
Michael Moore (n) (8) (3)

Contributing to the English list: Au Bord du Lac Bookstore, Bertrand, Bibliophile, Bonder Bookstore, Double Hook, Indigo, Paragraphe Books, Nicholas Hoare (Ogilvy and Greene Ave.), the Village Bookshop in Hudson. **Contributing to the French list:** Bertrand, Indigo, Librairie l'Outremont, Le Parchemin, Renaud Bray.

Copyright © 2024 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.
Powered by Newspapers.com